

Eastern MRS Meeting Notes
July 18, 2007
Edgecombe Co DSS

Counties Present: Beaufort, Bladen, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Franklin, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Johnston, Pamlico, Washington, Warren, Wilson

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Automation Update

MRS Institute

WF/CPS Collaboration

Sharing Info

Syncing CP/MRA

Joint Visits

Prevention

CFTs

Culture

News from Raleigh

- Rick highlighted some DCD letters that had come out. Several have come out recently – check the website for these letters.
- Evaluation Issues – Heather reiterated the DCD and Admin letter regarding Social Worker Visits with children. Any questions – contact Heather.
- Mentioned that MRS Institute flyer went out last week. Will try to have all counties there.

WF/CPS Collaboration

We are all in the same agency, but this seems to be hard. When Holly goes to counties and one side of the agency says they are doing ok, the other side of the agency feels that there is room for improvement. Wanted to talk about why this might be difficult to do and how we can work around this.

Culture

How many people feel that there is a different culture with WF and CPS? What are things that people perceive – regardless if they are true.

- It doesn't seem like there is a real willingness to share information sometimes.
- Some things Holly has noticed:
 - WF usually comes in and goes home at the same time, WF has more office work – some counties do very little home visits.
 - CPS has very varied hours, including lunch hours, is out of the office a lot, but frequently work after-hours. Those differences cause resentment
- The different hours can cause problems when CFTs are being scheduled and CPS would like to invite WF. To accommodate the family the meeting may be at 6pm, but the WF worker may not be inclined to come because they have been at work since 8am. The WF supervisor may not be as comfortable with allowing comp time as CPS is (where comp time is a way of life.)

- One county is letting people know at the interview that this is part of the job (both for CPS and WF) so that people are very clear that neither one is always a 8-5 job.
- Real difference in philosophy – WF is about empowering families whereas CPS is about how can I help you?
 - WF worker agreed with this – they are focused on getting the family to take personal responsibility and CPS is about helping to solve the problem and the CPS worker may handhold more than the WF workers are used to.
- CFTs are similar to Success teams. Not all counties do Success teams.
- Workers in counties here invite each other to CFT and Success meetings. Because of scheduling can't come all the time, but it is useful when they can.
- Greene county has always felt comfortable talking to each other, but they are a small county. However, it is improving even more, there is a CPS worker at the Success meetings – if the actual worker cannot be there, their supervisor will be there.

Has anyone here done any events to bring the two sides of the agency together?

- Guilford has done meet and greets. Get a chance to eat and also ask worker to worker questions. Has really improved communication.
- Halifax has designated one of their CPS workers to come to Success meetings and this has helped a lot.
- Johnston has reorganized and WF is under the Children's Services - the WF workers will handle all the Services Recommended cases, even if those families are not currently open in Work First. (Adolescent parents program is also under the same umbrella so they are all working with each other.) the WF workers in Johnston do both eligibility and benefits.
- Several counties here have WF workers that are blended – do both eligibility and benefits.
- Johnston – since they have blended the managers are together at management meetings, and also have other meetings that both sides attend.
- Bladen has lunch and learn monthly and each month a different service area presents.
- Halifax wrote their own protocol
 - IMPACT Improving and Accelerating Change Together.
 - CPS and WF developed it to ensure collaboration and visits together.
 - Management wanted to ensure communication through the life of the cases.
 - CPS goes to Success team meetings – one designated CPS worker, no matter if there is an open CPS case, if there is an open case, the CPS worker assigned to that case will go as well.
 - This says to staff that this is important – if management took the time to plan and design this protocol, staff know it is a priority for them.
- When Rick started in the county, contacting WF was part of a checklist, so he did it, but as he started to see families again and again, and developed a relationship with different WF workers, he really understood the benefits. Eventually they started having blended meetings, and then even went to the extent of inviting school social workers and others involved with the family.

What would you like to see at you agency to make this happen?

- One county said that they are in the process of moving them all into the same building which they think will help a lot.
- No one here felt that the confidentiality issue was a problem – people know that they can share info.

Additional benefits

- Record mining – when children are getting ready to age out of care, we need to have at least 5 significant contacts. It may be hard to get all the contacts that we need from CPS records, but sometimes there are people in the WF file that are significant contacts.

Service Agreements and Mutual Responsibility Agreements – do these match?

WF/CPS don't have that many cases in common, but when we do, what do people do to ensure that those things match?

- Wilson – if they get a CPS case that is open to WF and the finding is Services Needed or Substantiated, the CPS and WF worker get together to ensure that the case plans are complimentary. They may amend the MRA if necessary so that the two do not conflict.
- Need to make clear to the client that they have different responsibilities based on who's plan. If they don't do something on the WF plan, we will not be filing a petition, and also the reverse, let them know clearly what parts of the plan will result in filing if not completed.

Joint Home Visits

- Really depends on the worker – some workers are willing to step outside the box more than some others.
- Some counties don't have WF do home visits on a regular basis.
- Some concern that there are some issues when you are out talking to a family that they are not comfortable sharing with a WF worker sitting there.
 - WF needs to be aware. As a WF rep says "WF needs to know that bruising is a issue, but they don't need to know how many bruises and how big they were." Use common sense and discretion.
- What are benefits of joint home visits?
 - Puts the client on the spot and they have to be accountable and they can't try to play the social workers against each other (whether intentional or not.)
 - Many counties may do them on a case by case basis, but if the two social workers are talking to each other they may decide to do one.
 - One county does not do joint home visits, but when the WF client comes in if they have a CPS case open, the WF worker will call the CPS worker while the client is in the office so that the client knows that the two workers are talking.
- All counties should, at a minimum, be checking to see if there is an open case in the other service area. Even if there is not an open case, if there is some history, you can talk to their most recent worker and get a lot of information.
 - However Substance Abuse may cause a snag – because CPS is involuntary and WF is voluntary, this may cause issues with the benefits and federal SA confidentiality. They turn it back on the family – let them know that it needs to be discussed.

Prevention

First visits – when assessment workers go out on an initial assessment and they see poverty issues, do they call a WF worker immediately to get them involved?

- Doing this opens a lot of services other than just a check.
- Don't try to memorize all the things WF can offer, call them from the house, or try to make an appointment for the family.
- Counties that have really been able to put this type of service in place have been able to close more cases and prevent them from going to case management.

Poll – how would you rate your agency collaboration if 1 = not so much, 10 = awesome

- 1, 3, 5, 5, 3, 7 or 8, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 9, 5, 4
- Depends on who you talk to – some workers do it really well, and some don't do it as much.
- Holly is confused – everyone seems to think that they can improve here, but no one seems to be able to know how to talk about it when we try to discuss it.
- One of the things that helps, is a supervisor that has collaboration and communication as an expectation every time with all workers and all cases.
 - Guilford supervisor makes is protocol to check if there is a WF case – its part of your assessment, you have to involve WF throughout the entire case.
 - One of Johnston's staffing sheets asks for the collaterals, each time they staff a case, and WF needs to show up on there.

Barriers – how to overcome them?

- No one here feels like they have a major roadblock to this because of management (either supervisor or the Director). However people do feel that an 'official' blessing and mandate needs to come down from the top.
- Waiver counties – sometimes the stringent requirements for waiver counties cause an issue between WF and CPS.
 - Some problem from the fact of the Community involvement in the waiver plan. The community may have had the perception that people were getting a check and they did not want to work. All they were looking at was if they were working and not considering any of the other's circumstances in the families' situations.

Other thoughts

- Do we need to have something in policy regarding collaboration with WF?
- Feel that something needs to be said to 'powers that be' to make sure that counties realize that MRS Institute is for WF workers as well.
- Suggestion that if this is not in policy develop a presentation on Best Practice and present to the Directors.
- The Division has made an intentional plan to promote collaboration – it is no longer listed as the 7th (last) strategy.
- Holly reiterated that she strongly feels that this strategy is the one that will give you the biggest bang for your buck. Not only will it help their families it is beneficial to workers. It gives them a partner and a support.
- What is the best way to start?
 - Holly suggests that you bring the two sets of workers together and ask them, the people that do the work, how they think it will work best in your county.

- One of the critical needs is identifying common cases – this should be easy, but it does not seem to be. Sometimes when they start they do well with identifying new cases, but what about all the cases that are already open?

Patrick sought feedback on a new form of communication

- Google has a calendar program where you can create a public calendar.
- Division wants to create a public MRS calendar that would include all the MRS meeting dates, trainings, etc.
- One of the cool things is that when you click on the date of the meeting you can click on a map icon and it will give you directions to the meeting from your address.
- Can include facilitator forums, trainings.
- Do folks feel like this would be a useful tool? People said yes.

Ideas for future meetings

- DV – Crystal Williams or Angela Holloway – policy and practice
- Training – someone from staff development to talk about what trainings are required and let counties talk to them about their needs.

Future Meetings:

August: No Meetings due to the Institute

Eastern:

September - New Hanover DSS 26th

October – Wilson Co DSS 25th

November – Hertford Co 28th

Central:

September Guilford DSS 25th

October – Alamance Agricultural Ext. 17th

November – Rowan Co Library 27th

Western:

Remainder of Western meetings at AB Tech

September - Friday 21st

October - Wednesday 31st

November - Friday 30th